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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE QURAN.

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Translated from the second edition, with notes and references to the Quran and to other authorities, by Professor Frank K. Sanders, Ph.D., and Harry W. Dunning, B.A., of Yale University.

For the convenience of the student a list of the more accessible works on the history and characteristic elements of Islam is given below :

1. Müller, August. *Der Islam im Morgen- und Abendland*, 2 vols. 1887.
2. Muir, Sir Wm. *The Caliphate, its Rise, Decline and Fall*, 1891. An excellent and vivid summary of the facts set forth more in detail in his *Annals of the Early Caliphate* and in Weil's *Geschichte der Chalifen*.
3. Guyard, Professor Stanislas. Article in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. XVI., pp. 565-597 on the "Eastern Caliphate."
4. Dozy, R. *Essai sur l'histoire de l'Islamisme*, 1879. One of the best sketches of the sects of Islam, as well as of its development in the far East.
5. Von Kremer, A. *Geschichte des herrschenden Ideen d. Islam*. Another book of first importance to the student of the inner development of Islam.
6. Müller, August. Article in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. XXII., p. 659 ff. on "Sunnites and Shiites."
7. Sale, George. Section VIII. in the Preliminary Discourse found in his *Koran* gives a detailed account of the sects of Islam, while section IV. discusses the doctrines and precepts of the Quran.
8. Palmer, E. H. The introduction to his translation of the Quran, pp. lxxv-lxxvi gives many minor details.
9. Hughes, Rev. T. P. *A Dictionary of Islam*. This volume contains carefully written articles on any of the details mentioned above.
10. Smith, R. B. *Mohammed and Mohammedanism*, 1875. A vigorous setting forth of the best that can be said for Islam.
11. De Tassy, Garcin. *L'Islamisme d'après le Coran l'enseignement doctrinal et la pratique*. Paris, 1874.
12. Goldziher, Ignaz. *Muhammedanische Studien*, Vol. II. 1890, makes a study of the *Hadith* or the theologic-historical traditions as sources of reliable information.

ISLAM.

I. *Preliminary considerations.*—We pass on now from the history of the development of the Quran and its analysis to its inner character and consider it more with reference to its permanent value and in its entirety as a book of religion and law. We begin with its doctrine, not intending to describe it as a theological system, nor wishing to enter into the subtleties of the later schoolmen; partly because this would lead us beyond the proper limits of an introduction and especially because in the case of a child of nature, like Muhammad, in whom surely no trace of schooling or speculative learning is to be found, one cannot expect a systematic setting forth of ideas. This is most plainly shown by the fact that the most important dogmas of Islam on account of their indefiniteness, as we shall soon see, like those of Christianity, became the occasion of the most violent disputing and later even of the most sanguinary wars and persecutions, a state of affairs far more surprising among the disciples of Muhammad than among those of Christ. Christianity is in itself far richer in doctrine than Islam and dogmas such as that of the trinity, the miraculous conception of Christ and his resurrection, of the sacraments, and of the Church give more material for differing opinions than those of Islam, which recognizes but one God, sees only a prophet in Muhammad, and knows absolutely nothing of priesthood even though later Imâms¹ for political reasons wished to elevate themselves to the position of high priests. Besides not only were the essential features of Christianity more apt to occasion dissensions, but the way in which it was transmitted to posterity favored sectarianism more than Islam. Christ himself delivered his teachings orally and as opportunity offered, generally with no inter-connection. His words were committed to writing long after his death, translated into foreign tongues and mixed with subjective views so that the original sources of Christianity, already differing in so many

¹ The title "Imâm" belonged at first to the leader of the daily public prayer in the mosque. This function was regularly performed by the early Caliphs, so that they are often called Imâms. Later the temporal and spiritual authority came to be exercised by different persons.

ways, must have contained the germ of different religious ideas. On the contrary, Muhammad caused at any rate the greater part of the Quran to be written down and the rest was put in writing within two years after his death and in the Arabic language, his native tongue, which was and remained that of his people. Nevertheless Islam was divided into several sects during the first centuries of the Hijra, while religious wars, as bloody as those of Christendom, convulsed the Muslim world. Only because Muhammad himself had not the remotest idea of establishing a definite dogmatic structure was it possible, later on, when a more powerful impulse to learning than was the case with himself sprang up among his adherents, for a conflict about many of his teachings to arise. In fact Muhammad required of his adherents only a belief in a single, eternal, omnipresent, invisible, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise, just, satisfying, and merciful God, creator and preserver of the universe; further, a belief in Muhammad and the prophets before him as bearers of the divine revelations which were to preserve men from error and lead them to salvation, in angels as the instruments of his will, and finally in the resurrection of the dead and in a future life in which the righteous would be rewarded for their deeds and sinners punished. But simple as these three fundamental teachings of Islam, God, revelation, and judgment, are by themselves, they became the object of strife among the Muslims, even before they became intimately acquainted with Greek philosophy, as soon as the desire arose of giving this doctrine a speculative form which was entirely foreign to Muhammad himself, who usually spoke only according to the momentary pressure of his feelings. There is a considerable laxity in the Quran, especially in the method of its compilation, on account of which the true connection of two consecutive verses or their time and the cause of their revelation cannot be determined with certainty. This, in addition to the metaphorical expressions and the many apparent or real contradictions, naturally afforded to an infinite variety of sectaries a wide battlefield, which broadened as philosophic study spread among the Arabs. Every acquisition in this domain was to be treated as theology and justified from the sacred writings. But

before passing on to the divisions in Islam, caused by the war of reason (or rationalism) with faith, or by the desire to bring religion and philosophy into unison, it is necessary to mention an earlier, far deeper division which deals more with political differences.

II. *The election of the first three Caliphs.*—Muhammad closed his earthly career without having made the slightest reference to his succession. We not only find no passage in the Quran which deals with the condition of the kingdom after his death, but we have no authentic oral tradition, as proven by the diligent search of each party for proofs of their right to the Caliphate. Either Muhammad especially avoided speaking of his mortality, and the passages which proclaim him mortal have been interpolated by Abu Bakr, or he did not dare by preference of one party to embroil it with the other. In fact, he had not only to choose between Abu Bakr and Ali and disappoint in their hopes either his beloved daughter Fatima or his intriguing wife Ayisha, but he had also to choose between the people of Mecca, who had emigrated with him, and the people of Medina, to whose protection and aid he owed the extension of his power. Moreover it is possible that he did not feel justified in establishing an hereditary monarchy in a country where the republican form of government had always prevailed, and therefore kept silent, hoping that the worthiest of his companions would construct for himself the way to rulership. However that may be, it is entirely impossible to ascribe, as European scholars often do, the hereditary monarchy or the absolute despotism of the Muslim empires to Muhammad himself or to the religion founded by him. Muhammad himself wished above all things to be regarded as a prophet, not as a temporal ruler. When at the conquest of Mecca he passed by Abu Sofian in the midst of his allies and followers, that person said to Abbas, "By God, the kingdom of your nephew is great." Abbas replied, "He is a great prophet." And when Muhammad proclaimed himself the last of the prophets he could not have been thinking of spiritual power by divine right after him. This is indeed shown by Abu Bakr's own behavior at his election, for he laid stress

upon the superior claims of the refugees and did not assert his own rights; indeed he nominated Umar and Abu Ubaida for Caliphs; and even if this nomination was not in earnest because he foresaw that neither would accept the rulership during his life, yet it proves, at any rate, that the chief men of the nation and not the right of birth decided the succession. And was not the Quran, which was certainly to stand superior to the ruler, a powerful bar against despotism? As a lawgiver a Muslim prince could have no power, for the Quran was to be the everlasting law of the Muslims, and certainly was amply sufficient in the early times of Islam. But in the Quran not only the lives of believers but also their property was secured. The former can only be taken for murder, and of the latter only the legal tax can be exacted. The duties of the head of the state, according to the ideas of the Quran, consisted entirely in watching over the keeping of the law, in maintaining the army and in its use to strengthen and spread the faith. To make Muhammad responsible for the form of government which his successors introduced or for the horrible deeds of individual Muslim rulers is as unfair as to ascribe the despotism of many Christian countries to the gospel. Just as among Christians an attempt is often made to support hereditary and absolute power by the Scriptures, so very soon in Islam the temporal power received a religious sanction and the teaching of the Imâms formed a supplement to that of the church. The first three Caliphs considered themselves the worldly rather than spiritual successors of Muhammad and founded their right upon the choice or at least the consent of the Muslims; but the adherents of Ali and his family, even in the time of Uthman,¹ and especially during the wars with Muawiya, founded their claims upon a formal hereditary right. The Imâms soon came to be regarded as men especially enlightened by God, and in course of time were even honored and prayed to as an incarnation of the deity. Imâms not acknowledged by the people and government continued to be an object of honor and hope to their party even after their death, because of the belief in their future return to reëstablish right and truth,

¹That is, within a quarter of a century after the death of Muhammad.

just as Christians believe in a millennium under the rulership of a returned Redeemer.

III. *Sects which originated in disputes concerning the succession.*—The party which we shall designate by the general term Shiites, regardless of the peculiarities of the various sects into which they are divided, considered the first three Caliphs as usurpers and held the most extravagant views about the dignity and sanctity of the Imâm. Other Muslims, who are known by the term Sunnites,¹ acknowledge these Caliphs as lawful rulers and consider as usurpers the later ones who belonged to the family of Muhammad, even though they were not descended from his daughter, the wife of Ali. Others again, even in the time of Ali, saw in the Caliphate only a mere political institution, which had as its primary basis the prosperity of the people. Therefore they taught that the Imâmate in itself was not at all sacred and that every upright man, bond or free, of any family whatsoever, could be elevated to it ; and that if the Imâm or the Caliph should prove unworthy of his sacred office, it was permissible and even obligatory to depose him and fight against him. Those who held this view, which was of course vigorously opposed by non-Shiite authorities, were called Khârijites. It found many adherents among the most learned men of the first century of the Hijra and satisfactorily proves that the sacred writings of the Muslims do not countenance the later development of the Caliphate. It is noteworthy that in course of time this opinion became an article of faith : and that its adherents were condemned and punished as heretics ; although, according to an old and authentic tradition, even Abu Bakr, in his first address in the mosque at Medina at his accession to the Caliphate, said : “O ye people ! ye have chosen me as your chief, although I am not the best man among you. If I do right, do not refuse me your coöperation ; if I act unjustly, oppose me. . . . Obey me as long as I obey God and his apostle. But if I act contrary to the commands of God and his apostle, then renounce your allegiance to me.” Muhammad is consequently

¹ The Shiites and Sunnites are as definitely separated in ideas as Catholics and Protestants.

answerable for all the evils which arose from the conflicting teachings concerning the Imâmate and Caliphate only so far as he maintained a complete silence concerning the government of the kingdom after his death; for, strictly speaking, as the last man inspired by God he could have no successor, and if, as a learned orientalist thinks, he is to be commended for not deciding in favor of this or that favorite, still, in order to avoid all future contests, he should have more definitely determined the character of the temporal power and have established some general enactment about the succession; or, if he wished to allow a free choice to the people, he should certainly have revealed some law of election. A civil war almost broke out in Medina immediately after his death. A quarter of a century later two parties, the partisans of Ali and those of Uthman and his relatives, resorted to arms. Bloody wars followed, which occasioned greater and deeper dissensions among the believers than those existing among the different tribes in heathen times. This conflict between Shiites and Sunnites stretches out like a red thread through the whole history of the Caliphs and is carried on even now between the Sultan of Turkey and the Shah of Persia, sometimes with arms and sometimes with diplomatic notes and theological publications, although the latter is not a descendant of Ali and the former¹ is not even a member of Muhammad's race.

IV. *Various doctrines—fatalism.*—The doctrine of fatalism, as set forth by many orthodox Muslims and by all enemies to Islam, is absolutely destructive to human freedom of will. But it is more a product of politics than of faith. In the Quran it is used more to overcome timidity, to strengthen faith and submission to the will of God, to comfort in misfortune and to preserve moderation in success than to injure human activity or

¹ The Sultan of Turkey rests his claims to the spiritual and political power of the Caliphs upon the cession of his own rights to Sultan Selim I. by Mutawakkil, the last nominal Caliph, about 1520. The last real Caliph perished at the capture of Bagdad by the Tartars in A. H. 656 (1258 A. D.). Mutawakkil, though the last of a dynasty that nominally ruled in Egypt for several centuries, had no legal, moral or actual authority. The ruling dynasty in Persia has even less basis for its assertion of legitimacy.

to take away moral freedom. Rashness is expressly forbidden in the Quran by the words, "do not cast yourselves into danger."¹ Carefulness is often recommended, and even prayer, the most important ordinance of Islam, suffers a modification if the worshiper endangers his life by its strict performance;² and, although it is often repeated that God gives sustenance to men according to his will, this nowhere means that a Muslim is to lazily place his hands in his lap. But on the contrary it is even permitted on the holy day, Friday, after prayer, to return to work.³ Moreover, only a short passage from the Quran is to be read "because many are obliged to travel through the country to seek a living."⁴ Sundry other places in which an indifference to virtue is emphasized can only be understood as saying that man is not to be wholly absorbed in care for his sustenance and consequently to subordinate to it higher duties, the striving to please God by practicing virtue, as the apostle Peter writes, "Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you."⁵

V. *Predestination*.—As to the dogma of absolute predestination of men to happiness or misery, the religious system of Muhammad is not only entirely built upon fear and hope, for he continually exhorts to faith and pious deeds for the sake of reward in Paradise and warns from unbelief and sin by reason of punishment in Hell, therefore, of necessity, making the future fate of man dependent on his own will, but various passages in the Quran most decidedly oppose such an Augustinian type of predestination. But since it was taken up by the orthodox Imâms and is constantly by European writers ascribed to the founder of Islam and made a ground of reproach against him it is necessary at this point to go more into detail and to present more proofs of Muhammad's doctrine of free-will than would otherwise be required. Neither here nor in other dogmatic controversies can we take into account the oral traditions because of their untrustworthiness. All that a sober critic can obtain from them with satisfaction is represented by the statement of one of them which

¹ Sura 2:191.

⁴ Sura 73:20 (the long verse).

² Sura 2:239, 240; 4:102-104.

⁵ 1 Peter 5:7.

³ Sura 62:10.

makes Muhammad announce that Islam would separate into seventy-three sects, among whom those who recognized the freedom of the will were designated as the magi of Islam. Therefore we venture to quote the Quran on this matter: "Say" (God addresses Muhammad), "O ye people, there has come to you the truth from your Lord and he who is guided, his guidance is only for his soul, and he who errs errs only against it. And I am not a guardian over you."¹ "He who accepts guidance accepts it only for his own soul and he who errs errs only against it. Nor shall one burdened soul bear the burden of another nor would we punish until we had sent an apostle."² "Whoso is desirous of his life we hasten on for him therein what we please for whom we please: then we will make hell for him to broil in, despised and outcast. But whoso desires the next life and strives for it and is a believer, these their striving shall be gratefully received."³ "But say: the truth is from your Lord, so let him who will believe and let him who will disbelieve; verily we have prepared for the evil-doers a fire."⁴ "Naught prevented men from believing when the guidance came to them or from asking pardon of their Lord, except the coming on them of the course of those of yore or the coming of the torment before their eyes,"⁵ and "Follow the best that has been sent down to you from your Lord before there come on you the torment suddenly, ere ye can perceive. Lest the soul should say, 'O my sighing! for what I have neglected toward! for verily I was amongst those who did jest!' Or lest it should say, 'If God had but guided me, I should surely have been of those who fear.' Or lest it should say, when it sees the torment, 'Had I another turn I should be of those who do well. Yea! there came to thee my signs and thou didst call them lies, and wert too big with pride and wert of those who

¹ Sura 10:108. Compare also Sura 27:94, where Muhammad says at the end "I am only of those who warn."

² Sura 17:16. Compare also Sura 39:42.

³ Sura 17:19, 20.

⁴ Sura 18:28.

⁵ Sura 18:53, *i. e.*, they clung to ancestral beliefs and waited until punishment should reach them. Compare also 7:27 and 67:25.

misbelieved."¹ "And as for (the tribe of) Thamûd, we guided them (by the prophet Salih), but they preferred blindness to guidance and the thunder-clap of the torment of abasement caught them for what they had earned, but we saved those who believed and who did fear."²

These verses, to which many more might be added, prove satisfactorily that Muhammad not only did not hold to a consistent doctrine of predestination, as developed in Christianity by Lucidus and Gottschalk, and in Islam by the Jabarites and some other sects, but on the other hand that he was very much nearer the Pelagian system than even the more liberal Augustinian. Moreover, how could it be otherwise, for he did not regard the fall of man as did Augustine and the Christian church, and denied the doctrine of hereditary sin, which is the only thing that can reconcile unconditioned predestination with divine justice and holiness. It is true that, according to the teaching of the Quran, the first human pair were by reason of their disobedience driven out of the heavenly paradise on earth, and also that, since the first sin arose from the victory of selfishness over the will of God, mutual hatred and discord were predicted to the human race; but the Quran knows absolutely nothing of the condition of inward corruption transmitting itself to posterity in consequence of the sin of Adam, and protests in many places against the idea of responsibility for the sins of others. Muhammad also knows no other divine grace than revelation through prophets, partly to perfect human knowledge of good and evil, partly to assist against the wiles of Satan over to whom man is entirely delivered by his sinfulness, or has actually still more exposed himself. Adam repented of his sin and God pardoned them both again, saying: "Go down therefrom (Paradise) altogether and haply there may come from me a guidance and whoso follows my guidance, no fear is there nor shall they grieve; but those who misbelieve and call our signs lies they are the fellows of the fire: they shall dwell therein forever."³ Every prophet from Adam to Muhammad is accordingly a savior sent

¹ Sura 39:56-60.

² Sura 41:16, 17.

³ Sura 2:36, 37. Compare also Sura 7:18-24; 38:71-85; 20:115-124.

from God; but in order to be saved, that is, to attain to true insight, to higher knowledge, and so once more to the happiness of Paradise, belief in revelation and action in accordance therewith are necessary. Both these things depend solely on the human will. The divine will does not, according to the teaching of the Quran, remain entirely inactive in the case of the individual, but shows itself continually according to the inner character of the man, as mercy or justice. In fact Muhammad also admits what Pelagius conceded to Augustine, that God strengthens in the faith a man who has a will inclined to good, while he abandons to his ever-growing conception the man in whom the inclination to evil has the mastery, and thus in a way he may be said to harden him. So it is, of course, left to the inscrutable decision of the divine wisdom to determine at what time and what people he will favor with his guidance. This concession of reason to faith, which indeed cannot be questioned in both the Old and New Testament,¹ but not an unconditioned predestination, shows itself in the following verse: "There has come to you from God light and a perspicuous book. God guides thereby those who follow his pleasure to the way of peace and brings them out of the darkness to the light according to his will, and leads them on the right way."² "Those who misbelieve say: 'Unless a sign is sent down upon him from his Lord.' Say! the Lord leads whom he will astray and guides unto him those who turn again, those who believe, and whose hearts are comforted by the mention of God: aye! by the mention of God shall their hearts be comforted who believe and do what is right."³ "Those who believe not in God's signs God will not guide them and for them is grievous woe. Because they preferred the love of this world's life to the next, but God guides not the unbelieving people; these are they on whose hearts and hearing and eyesight God has set a stamp and these they are the careless."⁴ "God answers those who believe with sure word (the Quran) in this world and

¹ Compare Romans 1:28; 9:18; 11:7, 8. Exod. 4:21; Joshua 11:20.

² Sura 5:18.

³ Sura 13:27-29.

⁴ Sura 16:106, 109, 110.

the next; but God leads the wrongdoers astray, for God does what he will.”¹ “Some of them there are who listen to thee, until when they go forth from thee they say (mockingly) to those who have been given the knowledge: ‘What is this which he says now?’ These are those on whose hearts God has set a stamp and who follow their lusts; but those who are guided (by Muhammad) he guides them the more and gives them the due of their piety.”² “We have sent in every nation an apostle (to say), ‘Serve ye God and avoid Tâghût’ and amongst them are some whom God has guided and amongst them are some for whom error is due: Go ye about then on the earth and behold how was the end of those who called (God’s apostles) liars. If thou (Muhammad) art ever so eager for their guidance, verily God guides not those who go astray—nor have they any helpers.”³

These quotations show most decidedly that in matters of faith and righteousness man is no blind instrument of divine caprice, but on the contrary that it rests with him to believe the truth and to desire the good and that God supports those inclining towards right and truth, while he delivers over to their destruction those who shut their hearts to his grace as shown in revelation. The oft-recurring phrase in the Quran, “God guides whom he will and leaves in error whom he will,”⁴ which, to be sure, when removed from its context, might lead to the doctrine of Augustine, when read in accordance therewith, which indeed, as has been often said, cannot always be surely determined, must either be referred in general to the sending of a guiding prophet or to the divine care for the propagation of the faith. This aid is identical with the desire of God to support righteousness, while compulsion of the indifferent to belief by an especial interference is contrary to divine justice and therefore cannot lie in his will. Verse 209 of Sura 2 clearly favors this opinion, for immediately after the words, “God sent prophets with good

¹ Sura 14:32.

² Sura 47:18, 19. Compare also Sura 18:55.

³ Sura 16:38, 39.

⁴ Compare Romans 9:18.

tidings and with warnings and guided the believers thereby," we read, "God guides whom he will on the straight path." So also verse 19 of Sura 39, which says, "Then give glad tidings to my servants who listen to the word (the revelation) and follow the best thereof. They it is whom God guides and they it is who are endowed with wills; but him against whom the word of torment is due, canst thou rescue him from the fire?" So it must be plain to every unprejudiced reader of the Quran that Muhammad by no means denied the freedom of the human will.